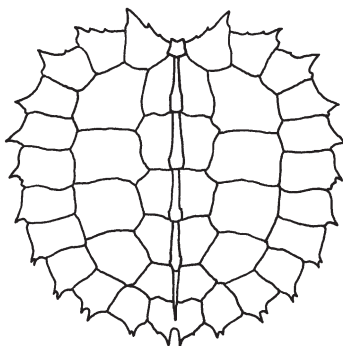


# LES TORTUES DE L'INDOCHINE

AVEC UNE NOTE SUR LA PÊCHE ET L'ÉLEVAGE DES  
TORTUES DE MER PAR F. LE POULAIN

RENÉ LEON BOURRET



INTRODUCTION BY INDRANEIL DAS



SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES

## EDITOR'S NOTE

The original wrappers to *Les Tortues de l'Indochine* indicate the date of publication of the work as "30 Juin 1941." Bourret authored the majority of the work, but F. Le Poulain wrote the concluding section—"Note sur les Tortues de Mer du Golfe de Siam," which appears on pages 213-218 and is accompanied by plates XLV-XLVIII. These are photographic plates and are of very poor quality. In all original copies of the work examined the contrast is very high, with the result that darker portions of the images are almost unrecognizable. Their reproductions in this facsimile faithfully capture what little detail is visible in the originals. Chapter III (Notions sur la morphologie) as well as the keys from *Les Tortues de l'Indochine* were also published separately in Hanoi, along with a one page preface, as "Comment Déterminer une Tortue d'Indochine" (40 pp.) in *Bulletin Générale d'Instruction Publique* (1941).

In this reprint, some minor changes have been made relative to the original in order to save significant production expense. The six color plates originally appeared after p. 126 (Planche A), after p. 150 (Planches B-D), before p. 189 (Planche E), and after p. 192 (Planche F). In this facsimile these plates are grouped and placed following page 136. All black and white plates appear in their original positions.

SSAR is grateful to the Yale University Library for allowing its copy of *Les Tortues de l'Indochine* to be used for the production of this facsimile reprint, to Dr. Indraneil Das for providing the introduction to the book, and to Brian T. Roach for cover design artwork. Publication of this book was supported by the Joseph R. Bailey Endowment and by the generous donations of the patron and sponsors.

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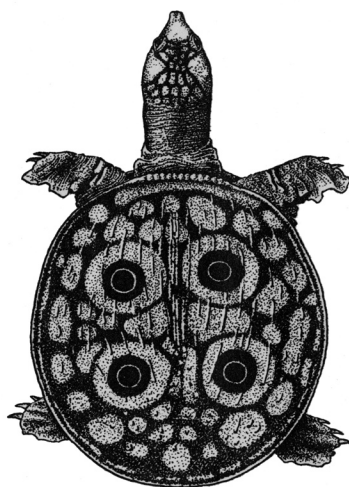
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## RENÉ LEON BOURRET (1884–1957) AND *LES TORTUES DE L'INDOCHINE*

Indraneil Das\*

French Indo-China, or Indo-Chine Française, comprising modern Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, as well as the territory of Kwangchowan — a small peninsula along the southern coast of present day Guangdong Province, China, was surely the jewel in the crown of France's colonial holdings. From 1859 until the end of the bitter Franco-Viet Minh War (1946–1954), France sent many of her sons to this, arguably her greatest colony. Among the earliest travelers of note were Henri Mouhot (1826–1861), pioneering photographer, scientific collector and writer and François Garnier (1839–1873), naval officer and explorer of the Mekong (circa. 1886). Mouhot is credited with the discovery, or at least extensive documentation (based on a visit in 1859), of the temples of Angkor-Wat, a fabulous lost city in the middle of a jungle in what is now Cambodia, whereas Garnier was a staunch nationalist, set on outdoing British colonial achievements. They were followed by many biologists, geologists, geographers and others whose accumulated discoveries constitute part of the substantial French contribution to the science and exploration of the Far East.

One such person was René Leon Bourret (born 28 January 1884), geologist and herpetologist. Born in Nérac, Lot-et-Garonne, France, in 1900 he went to Tonkin (Tonkijn in the French of the early colonial period, and Dong Kinh in contemporary Vietnamese, meaning 'Eastern Capital'), now Hanoi, in Indochina to join the military. By 1907, he was a surveyor (he subsequently received a doctorate in geology from the Université de Toulouse) at the Cadastral Survey, serving as an assistant at the Mining and Geographical Survey after World War I. During this time, he published papers on the geology of Tonkin and Laos. Bourret's herpetological publications include a series of 25 "Notes herpétologiques sur l'Indochine française," in addition to several shorter guides and longer monographs on the herpetofauna of the region, in which he described his collections from Indo-China. These contributions include new distributional records as well as the descriptions of many new species and subspecies. Remarkably, Bourret remained in Indochina during the Japanese occupation (1943–1945).

*Les Tortues de l'Indochine* (hereafter *Les Tortues*), published in 1941, is a companion volume to Bourret's major treatises on snakes (1936a; 1936b) and amphibians (1942). It was published as the 38th in the series *Notes de l'Institut Océanographique de l'Indochine*, which in Bourret's time was edited by the Institute's directors, Armand Krempf and Pierre Chevey, and published at the Station Maritime de Cauda, Province de Nhatrang (Fig. 1). The volume on lizards was completed in 1943, at the height of World War II and the German occupation of France, and was unfortunately never published (Adler, 1989). The primary purpose of these tomes was to provide an update and complement to the *Fauna of British India* series on reptiles by Malcolm Arthur Smith (1931, 1935, 1943), concentrating on

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